

## The Wright Speakership

**Mr. OLESZEK.** To start the Speaker Wright years, let me introduce the moderator for this segment, and that is Janet Hook. She is the chief congressional correspondent for the *Los Angeles Times*. Previously, she covered Capitol Hill for many, many years with *Congressional Quarterly*. Ms. Hook won the Everett McKinley Dirksen Award for superlative congressional coverage. She is also a graduate of Harvard University and the London School of Economics. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to turn the podium over to Janet Hook.

**Ms. HOOK.** Thank you, Walter. Walter's right. I have been covering Congress for a long time. In fact at the very beginning of my career working for *Congressional Quarterly*, I covered Congress when Jim Wright was Speaker. It was in covering Speaker Wright's House that I developed my now long-term affection for covering Congress. I've found it to be a stimulating and tumultuous place to cover. And I first learned those lessons covering Speaker Wright.

Jim Wright's career in the House spanned more than a quarter-century of great change in Congress, the country, and the speakership. When Jim Wright first came to Congress, Eisenhower was President, Sam Rayburn was Speaker of the House, and, at that point, the baby boom was just a bunch of babies. When Wright left Congress in 1989, George Herbert Walker Bush was President, baby boomers were running around the House, and the challenge of running the House as Speaker was far greater, or maybe it was just different, than it was for Sam Rayburn.

Jim Wright began his career in the Texas State legislature and as mayor of Weatherford, Texas. He was elected to the House in 1954 and quickly found his legislative home on the Public Works Committee. He unexpectedly leapt into the House Democratic leadership in 1976 when he was elected majority leader in a hotly contested race, which in the end was decided by a one-vote margin. That put him in position to rise without opposition to become House Speaker in 1987 after Tip O'Neill retired.

Jim Wright's role as Speaker was far broader than just being head of the House. He was, like Tip, the leader of a Democratic opposition to a Republican President. And he left his stamp on more than just House procedures. He left his stamp on policy, particularly on U.S. foreign policy in Central America where he played a key role in fostering the peace process

that eventually settled a decade-long conflict in the region. He left the speakership and the House in 1989 in the middle of a politically charged ethics investigation of the sort that was becoming quite common around that time. And it was a trend in American politics that Speaker Wright denounced as “mindless cannibalism” in his last memorable speech to the House. Speaker Wright returned to Texas where he has pursued an active life in business, education, and writing. He’s mined his Washington experience in teaching a popular course at Texas Christian University called “Congress and the President.” He’s been writing newspaper columns, reviewing books and lecturing, and we’re glad he could come here to talk to us about his years as Speaker.

After we hear from Speaker Wright, we will hear a Democratic perspective on Wright’s speakership from David Bonior, who served in the House for 26 years and rose himself to the upper ranks of his party’s leadership. He was first elected in 1976 and represented a blue-collar district in southeastern Michigan for all those years. And one of his first big steps into leadership came during Jim Wright’s era when Mr. Bonior was named chief deputy whip. In 1991 he was elected majority whip by the House Democratic Caucus. He retired from the House in 2002 to run for Governor of Michigan. Since then he’s served on the boards of several public service organizations and he teaches labor studies now at Wayne State University.

After we hear from Mr. Bonior, we will hear from the Republican side of the aisle, from former Texas Congressman Tom Loeffler, who was in his day David Bonior’s counterpart in the House Republican leadership. He was chief deputy whip when Bob Michel was the GOP leader, and he helped to round up the votes in 1981 for Ronald Reagan’s tax and spending policies. After leaving the House in 1986, he worked in the Reagan White House and with Speaker Wright on resolving the conflict in Central America. He’s gone on to found his own law and lobbying firm, and he’s continued to be active in Presidential and party politics. Let’s start with Speaker Wright.

**Speaker WRIGHT.** Thank you for that gracious introduction. I can’t begin without commenting about the thoroughly sentimental attachment I have to this occasion, this day, here in this gracious room. It was exactly 31 years ago today—on November 12, 1972—that I had the wonderful honor to be married to Betty. And it was right here in this room, by the grace of Speaker Carl Albert, that we had our wedding reception.

This has been a marvelous, even celebratory, occasion for me. I hope that our collective recollections will be beneficial to all of us here, and to those who view them on C-SPAN or read of them in the published transcript. Looking back in retrospect and rejoicing in remembered incidents that some of us shared together reminds me that to be chosen by one’s colleagues to serve as Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives is prob-

ably the greatest honor and among the highest responsibilities that anyone could bestow, and I shall always be grateful for that enormous privilege. The speakership provides fully as much challenge as any Speaker is prepared to accept. Over the years, the office has been what changing times and individual occupants have made of it.

Sam Rayburn was Speaker when I entered the House in 1955. He impressed me enormously. It was from his example, no doubt, that I formed my basic concept of a Speaker's role. Rayburn was an effective leader. He saw national needs and made things happen. Under his guidance, the legislative branch was more creative than passive. During the Eisenhower Presidency, it initiated most of the domestic agenda.

Mr. Rayburn was a stickler for polite and civil debate. He taught that a lawmaker's greatest asset was the ability to disagree without being disagreeable. He insisted that Members treat one another with courtesy and respect. "The Speaker," said Rayburn, "always takes the word of a Member." In his mind, we all were gentlemen—and ladies were ladies.

One illustration of the way Rayburn led is vivid in my mind. It was 1957, my second term in Congress. The Senate, for the first time since Reconstruction days, voted cloture on a civil rights bill and passed it. Throughout the Old South, including Texas, there erupted a cascade of editorial and vocal outrage. Several hundred letters of bitter denunciation flooded my office.

As the bill came to the House, Speaker Rayburn sent a page to ask me to come to the podium and talk with him. He didn't cajole and didn't threaten. I remember exactly what he said: "Jim, I think you want to vote for this bill. I'm sure you're getting hundreds of letters threatening you with all manner of retribution if you do. But I believe you're strong enough to overcome that, and I know you'll be proud in future years that you did!" As things turned out, he was right on all four counts.

That's the way he led. He appealed to the best in us. Never to fear or hate, or negative motivations. That's why I loved him. And that's why I wanted to emulate him.

From this, and from my personal friendships with Speakers John McCormack, Carl Albert and Tip O'Neill, I had developed over a period of 32 years an exalted view of the Speaker's role, maybe even an impossibly demanding conception of what a Speaker should be able to achieve for the country.

## Four Policy Changes

Challenges beset every Speaker. Perhaps my most difficult balancing act lay in trying to advance a progressive domestic agenda that I thought

important, over the active opposition of a popular and determined President, while trying to bridge the gap between that President and his severest critics in matters of foreign affairs.

As I prepared to assume the Speaker's office in January 1987, our government faced three problems of critical proportions: a historic budget deficit, a threatening trade deficit, and a growing social deficit. I firmly believed that all three deserved active attention.

Before I could implement a plan to address these problems, a fourth challenge arose. We were suddenly and unexpectedly confronted with a shocking constitutional crisis whirling around the Iran-Contra revelations. That news exploded on the public consciousness just 6 weeks prior to my election as Speaker.

These four realities of the historic moment would shape the thrust and direction of my 2½ years of tenure. Although clearly related, each of these problems represented a separate challenge and required a separate strategy.

What we were able to do was far from a one-man effort. I discussed these problems daily with Majority Leader Tom Foley, wise and more cautious than I; Majority Whip Tony Coelho, brilliant and creative; and my newly appointed deputy whip, David Bonior, a man of forthright convictions and trusted implicitly by our Members.

## Budget Deficit

The budget deficit, unattended, could doom any serious effort to come to grips with the other two deficits. In the past 6 years, we had doubled military expenditures (from \$148 billion in 1980 to approximately \$300 billion in 1986) while cutting taxes by approximately \$165 billion a year.

As a result, we had almost tripled the national debt. In 6 years it had skyrocketed from slightly under \$1 trillion to almost \$3 trillion as I took the Speaker's chair. The annual interest payments on the debt had skyrocketed from about \$50 billion in 1980 to some \$150 billion, draining away that much more money from our Government's commitments.

President Reagan, with all his winsome wit, inspiring charm and unshakable faith in what he called "supply side" economics, actually seemed to believe that we could double military spending, drastically reduce taxes for the top brackets, and still balance the budget simply by cutting "waste, fraud and abuse" in domestic programs.

Unfortunately, by 1987, the total elimination of all discretionary domestic expenditures would not have balanced the budget. The President, however, refused to agree to altering course. Obviously, if a change were to come, Congress would have to take the initiative.

It seemed clear to me that the costly drift could not be arrested except by a combination of three things: more revenues (translate taxes), and cuts in both military and domestic expenditures. No one of these three could attain the result alone. Most Members of Congress recognized this truth, but convincing them that the public understood and would applaud heroic action on the budgetary front was a major challenge.

What is a Speaker to do? He sees the Treasury hemorrhaging but is aware of his colleagues' nervousness about applying the only tourniquet that will stop the bleeding.

I knew how hard it would be to patch together any budget resolution that would pass the House, let alone one with real teeth in it. And the country sorely needed serious increases in several vital domestic programs.

Bill Gray of Pennsylvania was chairman of the Budget Committee and a gifted ally. Articulate, knowledgeable and patient, he led the committee with skill and understanding as its members worked and groped their way toward a realistic plan. Several times, at his invitation, I came and sat with them as they talked their way to a logical conclusion.

The resolution that emerged in mid-spring called for \$36 billion in actual deficit reduction, half of this in new taxes and half in spending cuts. The \$18 billion in reduced expenditures was divided evenly between defense spending and domestic programs. This budget package passed the House by a comfortable margin.

Congress still was a long way from achieving the goal, but we had made a beginning. Ultimately, I would learn just how hard it was to pass any tax bill with the White House adamantly opposed.

## Trade Deficit

The trade deficit, as 1987 began, was only starting to command serious public attention. It had already stretched its fingers deeply into American pockets. Six years earlier, at the end of the seventies, we were the world's biggest creditor nation. By the time I assumed the speakership, our country had become the world's largest debtor. During 1986, Americans spent \$175 billion more for goods from other countries than we sold abroad in American-made products.

A growing number of forward-looking American business, labor and academic leaders, alarmed by the trends they saw, had begun to ask for a concerted national effort to stem the tide. Our role had reversed from seller to buyer and from lender to borrower. We were borrowing from other countries not only to finance our purchases from them but to finance our national debt. More and more of our Government bonds, and more and more private domestic assets were held by foreigners—land, banks, factories, ho-

tels, newspapers. We were like a family which used to own the community bank but discovered suddenly that it no longer did and owed more to the bank than any other family in town.

The Democratic Leadership Council held its annual conference in Williamsburg, Virginia, on December 12, 1986. There I addressed the trade issue—the need to improve America’s competitive position by enhancing productivity, reviving the level of industrial research, modernizing factories, updating job skills, and tightening reciprocity requirements in our trade agreements with other countries, to include fair wages for workers who produced goods in bilateral trade.

Afterward, I had a long conversation with Lloyd Hand, former White House Chief of Protocol. He and I went to see John Young who, along with other business leaders, had in the past year at President Reagan’s request conducted an intensive study of the trade problem. The business group issued a report, which they felt had been generally ignored.

At their encouragement, I began to explore the possibility of a national conference on competitiveness to be attended by distinguished specialists in the fields of business, labor and academia.

Eager that our efforts should be bipartisan, I talked personally with House Republican Leader Bob Michel and Senate Minority Leader Bob Dole, as well as with Senate Majority Leader Robert Byrd. All agreed we needed such a meeting, and we made up a broad list of invitees. We sent out invitations to this blue ribbon list jointly in our four names.

This conference was scheduled for January 21, 1987, here in the Cannon Caucus Room. I talked with Treasury Secretary Jim Baker and U.S. Trade Representative Clayton Yuetter, inviting their attendance.

A week later the invitations went out to the selected cross section of experts, and I discovered how difficult it would be to perfect a truly bipartisan approach to the trade issue. Both Republican leaders, Bob Michel and Bob Dole, called to tell me they were under heavy pressure from Reagan administration officials to withdraw from formal sponsorship of the event.

The White House may have felt that we needed no change in our trade policies, or possibly it resented congressional efforts to take an initiative. I was disappointed but not discouraged. It just meant we would have to work that much harder to achieve bipartisan accord.

The conference took place as scheduled, attended by many Republican and Democratic Members of each House. The panel of distinguished authorities included corporate executives, union leaders, university presidents, and academic specialists.

So broad was the range of their constructive suggestions—from improved job training for America’s work force to a renewal of business incentives for modernizing America’s aging industrial plants, from antitrust enforcement to renegotiation of copyright and intellectual property rights

agreements—that I knew it would require the active cooperation of at least 12 House committees.

On the next day, I hosted a luncheon for House committee chairmen in the Speaker's private dining room. In the first 2 weeks of the session, the House, at my urging, had already passed a clean water bill and a highway bill by votes easily big enough to override vetoes. We had begun committee hearings on the first major bill to provide help for the homeless. A spirit of ebullience prevailed. We discussed the agenda for the year, the bills which would comprise our effort to surmount the three deficits. One famous first: committee chairmen all accepted specific deadlines for having their bills ready for floor action.

On the trade bill I promised to respect each committee's turf by assigning separate titles of a composite work to the committees that had jurisdiction over the varied segments. Chairmen Dan Rostenkowski of Ways and Means, John Dingell of Commerce, Jack Brooks of Judiciary, and Kika de la Garza of Agriculture each promised to give top priority to their segments of this important centerpiece of our common agenda.

Five days later, following President Reagan's State of the Union Message, Senate Majority Leader Robert Byrd and I divided the 30 minutes allotted by the television networks for the Democratic response. Senator Byrd addressed foreign and military affairs and I the domestic policy agenda.

From the cascade of mail and spontaneous telephoned response, I knew within days that we had struck a vital nerve with the public and could count on a lot of popular support if we stuck with our promises.

Eager for a bipartisan approach, I invited leading Democrats and Republicans from 12 House committees to sit together around the tables in the Speaker's dining room and discuss ways to improve our Nation's trade balance. We agreed to incorporate the best ideas from our several sources into an omnibus bill and to schedule it for action in the House on April 28.

This omnibus bill, H.R. 3, passed the House with Democratic and Republican support by the preponderant vote of 290 to 137. H.R. 3 represented the most important trade legislation since the thirties. The Senate held the bill under consideration for more than a year, altering and fine tuning several of its provisions, before finally passing it largely intact in the summer of 1988.

One provision, requiring advance notification to the workers before summarily shutting down an American plant, drew the ire of President Reagan. He vetoed the big bill, protesting that such a requirement had no place in trade legislation.

We probably could have overridden his veto. To avoid conflict, we simply removed that provision, made it into a separate bill, and then reenacted both bills simultaneously without changing so much as a comma. President

Reagan signed the two bills. What mattered to us was the result, not winning a partisan fight with the President by overriding his veto.

## Social Deficit

The social deficit—a growing backlog of human problems and unmet social needs here in our country—presented a different challenge entirely. As hard as I tried to promote consensus on issues of international trade, I knew it would be futile to try to conciliate the position of the congressional majority on social policy with that of the Reagan administration. Too wide a gulf separated us.

Since the Reagan budget amendments and tax cuts of 1981, a lot of Americans at the bottom of the economic spectrum had fallen through the safety net. For the first time since the thirties, an army of homeless people had begun to appear on America's streets.

The level of funding had been cut for education and civilian research. Several years of underinvestment had begun to rip holes in our social fabric. There'd been a slow deterioration of America's public infrastructure—the roads, bridges, airports, dams, navigable waterways, underground pipes—all that lifeline network of public facilities on which Americans depend. The cities of America, and their problems, were being ignored.

Since 1980 our annual investment in America—public services such as education, transportation, law enforcement, environmental protection, housing and public health—those things that tend to make life better for the average citizen—had declined by about one-fourth.

Something else, new and alien to the American experience, was beginning to appear—the disturbing phenomenon of downward mobility. For the first time since polling entered the American scene, a majority of Americans were saying they did not expect their children to enjoy as good a standard of living as they, themselves, had enjoyed.

As Kevin Phillips would point out in his book, *The Politics of Rich and Poor*, the gap between rich and poor was widening, thanks in considerable part to the conscious economic policies of the past 6 years—less for student loans to improvident youngsters, more breaks for upper-income taxpayers.

Our spending priorities during the eighties, I was convinced, had been badly skewed. A big majority of the Democrats in Congress were eager to begin a reversal of the 6-year trend, to restore some of the necessary social underpinnings. There was evidence that the public supported this objective. Polls showed that 62 percent of the people rated the economy “not so good” or “poor” and 72 percent believed Congress must do more for the homeless, for affordable housing and educational opportunities.

As Speaker, I felt a strong obligation to set in motion a reversal of the trends that were moving so rapidly toward the concentration of America's wealth into fewer hands. This meant confronting the administration directly on a wide range of domestic priorities. Tom Foley, Tony Coelho, David Bonior, and I agreed that we would have to begin with a few identifiable and achievable objectives.

Getting the Congress and the public to focus on these specific objectives was the challenge. In my State of the Union response in January 1987, I named six action priorities. We had reserved low bill numbers to identify these agenda items. One year later, at the beginning of 1988, I was able to give a televised progress report. The clean water bill, the highway bill and the trade reform bill were H.R. 1, 2, and 3, respectively. Each was passed on schedule and each prevailed over a Presidential veto.

Additionally, we passed the first bill to provide help for volunteer groups offering shelters and meals for the homeless, and the first important expansion of Medicare for catastrophic illnesses, a bill which later would be repealed in a fight over funding. We increased amounts for college student aid. We authorized a massive effort to combat drugs, and this omnibus bill, like the trade bill, was crafted and passed with bipartisan sponsorship and support.

In 1988, for the first time in more than 40 years, Congress passed all thirteen major appropriation bills and delivered them to the President for signing into law before the start of the new fiscal year.

The public responded enthusiastically to this activist schedule. Polls showed the American people were giving Congress higher job ratings than they had done in many years.

Of the first three, overriding challenges, the 100th Congress made good on two of them—the trade deficit and the social deficit. On those, Congress may have earned an A—.

We did less well on the budget. While the House passed a budget resolution cutting the fiscal deficit by an appreciable amount and also pushed through by a hard-fought one-vote margin a reconciliation bill to carry out that objective, that level of deficit reduction, particularly as it involved taxes, could not be sustained in the Senate.

Our House budget resolution had called for a net deficit reduction of \$38 billion. We had divided this figure equally among military expenditures, domestic expenditures, and selective reductions in the Reagan tax breaks of 1981 for some of America's most affluent citizens. The House reconciliation bill remained true to this pattern, and confronted me with the most legislatively confounding day of my speakership. That day was mentioned in the prior discussion segment. Looking back, I am not sure I made the right or wisest personal judgments that day.

That was the first and only time in my speakership when our system of vote counters failed us. Their composite report had showed we could pass the rule for the reconciliation bill. To my great surprise, we lost the vote on the rule. The unexpected controversy involved inclusion in the bill of some reforms in the welfare system that many Members thought should be handled as a separate bill. They prevailed, and the rule went down.

Ordinarily, this would have meant we would have to wait for the next legislative day to consider an amended rule. Meanwhile, the news media would have had 24 hours in which to trumpet the news that the House, confronted with the tough decisions on taxes and the budget, had been unable to face up to the hard choices.

Eager to forestall that, I adjourned the House and reconvened it a few minutes later. Technically, we now were in a second legislative day and could take up an amended rule and the bill, dropping the one disputed provision to be handled separately, on its own.

That was legal, but it was a rarely used tactic. A good number of my Republican colleagues thought my decision heavyhanded. Maybe it was. To make matters worse, later that afternoon, on the final passage of the reconciliation bill, there was a {one vote—205 to 206—defeat of a deficit reduction bill.} Told that Democrats Marty Russo of Illinois and George Miller of California, who were recorded “no,” had changed their minds and were returning from the House Office Building to change their votes, I held the vote open for about 10 minutes to accommodate them. And their changed votes, of course, would have resolved the vote in the affirmative. They didn’t return.

Just as I was about to rap the gavel and declare that the bill had failed of passage, Democrat Jim Chapman of Texas did return. He went to the well of the House and changed his vote from “no” to “aye.” That flipped the margin. That vital reconciliation bill passed by that one vote!

But the way I had handled it provoked a storm of protest among the minority. Trent Lott, for one, hit the back of a seat so hard with his open hand that I supposed he’d broken it. Others, too, were quite angry.

The bottom line is that what I’d done that day did not contribute to harmonious relations. Although the maneuvers were legal and in keeping with the rules, my mind was too determined, my attitude too insistent. I believe that I offended a number of my Republican colleagues. I won the vote but sacrificed a more precious commodity—good will. In the end, it wasn’t worth it. If that day were to do over again, I like to think I’d do it differently.

Our ultimate performance on the budget was impressive only in the sense that it kept things from getting much worse. Maybe we deserve only a C+ on the budget. Maybe a B+ overall.

As Speaker, I spent a large piece of my political capital in the effort to make the tax burden fall more fairly, only to discover that I had over-matched myself!

Any tax bill, I learned to my dismay, was virtually unattainable absent the President's agreement. It takes two-thirds to override vetoes. We simply could not get public opinion focused clearly on the issue of tax fairness and the unambiguous fact that, without more taxes from somebody, the budget can never be balanced. Having failed to draw that issue sharply enough, I believe my leadership was just not quite equal to that particular challenge.

### Iran-Contra

One major challenge remained—to head off the constitutional crisis brewing over the newly revealed Iran-Contra scandal, and to settle the bitterly divisive issue of our covert involvement in Central American wars.

On three occasions, Congress had voted to discontinue all military assistance to the Contras attempting to overthrow Nicaragua's Government. In the previous year, we had voted to ban the selling of any weapons to Iran.

Now we learned that a secret group, operating out of the White House, had contrived, contrary to these laws, to sell U.S. weapons to Iran. Perpetrators had turned over the proceeds, without notifying anyone in Congress, to the military forces trying to overthrow Nicaragua's Government. President Reagan vowed that he had not known personally of this, and I wanted ardently to believe him.

This was the most shocking revelation since the Watergate burglary and coverup. At least four laws—the National Security Act, the Arms Export Control Act, the Department of Defense Appropriations Act, and the Anti-Terrorism Act—had been blatantly violated.

So flagrant was the flouting of law that a hot volcanic lava of anger began boiling inside the Congress. First whispers, the audible demands for impeachment proceedings growled in private conversations wherever Democratic Members met. Congress was out of session when the shocking news broke, but pressure was building. Soon word leaked out that Lt. Col. Oliver North was systematically shredding all written evidence relating to the illicit adventure before Congress could reconvene and subpoena the documents. This fanned the flames to a higher intensity.

This situation had explosive potential. During December, several House committee and subcommittee chairmen contacted me, each wanting to schedule hearings on some separate facet of the big story, which dominated Washington news that month. Without a clear sense of direction, the new Congress could degenerate into a ten-ring circus as committees vied with

one another for sensational confrontations with various officials of the executive branch.

The last thing we needed was an impeachment outcry, or a frontal challenge to the President's personal integrity. Like other Members and millions of private citizens, I had agonized through the long weeks in 1973 that led to the impeachment hearing on President Nixon, culminating in his resignation. I wanted no repeat of that scenario. The country could ill afford it.

Determined that all of the pertinent facts must be disclosed in a dignified way, preserving the congressional authority without precipitating a full scale constitutional crisis, I met with Senate Majority Leader Robert Byrd. He felt exactly as I did. We saw no national purpose to be served by embarrassing the President personally.

Jointly, we announced that there would be one congressional hearing on the subject, not several. It would be a joint meeting of select House and Senate committees. Senator Byrd and I would appoint Democratic Members; Minority Leaders Michel and Dole would select Republican Members.

Anxious to protect the credibility and prestige of the special select committee, I very carefully chose the most respected authorities I could find: Chairmen Peter Rodino of Judiciary, Jack Brooks of Government Operations, Dante Fascell of Foreign Affairs, Les Aspin of Armed Services, and Louis Stokes of Intelligence.

To signal the importance I attached to this mission, I asked House Majority Leader Tom Foley to serve as my personal representative and appointed Edward P. Boland to the panel, the principal author of several of the laws that had been violated. And I told each of them personally that I thought it would be a disservice to the Nation if anyone mentioned the word "impeachment."

I thought a long while before choosing a chairman for the whole group and finally settled on Lee Hamilton of Indiana, ranking member of the Foreign Affairs Committee and former chairman of the House Intelligence Committee. He had a reputation for objectivity and a judicious, non-inflammatory manner. I did not want the hearing to be, or even seem to be, a witch hunt. As much as I disagreed with Mr. Reagan on domestic priorities, I disapproved anyone with a private agenda of personally embarrassing the President. To complete my list of appointees, I named Ed Jenkins of Georgia, a good country lawyer. I was not trying to prejudge the committee's findings. I was trying to moderate their explosive potential to split the country apart.

Senator Byrd also chose a responsible panel. He and I agreed that, to the extent of our ability to influence it, the hearing must not smack of partisanship. It would be open to the media and nationally televised. Byrd's chairman, Senator Daniel Inouye of Hawaii, was ideally suited by tempera-

ment and conviction for his role. His demeanor was calm and rational. He and Hamilton did their best to be impartial and scrupulously fair to Republican colleagues appointed by Dole and Michel and to hold down temptations to inflammatory rhetoric.

Hamilton wanted to agree in advance to an arbitrary date to terminate the proceedings. Otherwise, he argued, they could go virtually forever to the detriment of other business. He also proposed giving limited immunity from prosecution to induce testimony from Lt. Col. North, the individual most involved in handling a number of the details of the covert transaction. At least two of the House panelists privately protested, but a majority agreed to back the chairman's decision. As it turns out, this may have compromised the efforts of the special prosecutor, Lawrence E. Walsh. But our overriding concern in the congressional leadership, frankly, was less in embarrassing the administration and sending people to jail than in getting at the truth, maintaining the Nation's equilibrium, emphasizing the rule of law, and avoiding a bloody constitutional confrontation.

Additionally, I felt that we had to heal the malingering wound that had festered for 5 years over our country's secret and sometimes illegal sponsorship of the gory attempts to overthrow the Nicaraguan Government by force of arms. More than 100,000 people had died in Nicaragua and El Salvador. Congress itself had been closely divided, vacillating between funding and rebuffing President Reagan's demands for military aid to the Contras.

In July 1987, my friend and former colleague, Tom Loeffler, came by my office to inform me that he had been appointed by the President as an emissary to Congress. We talked about Central America. I told him I thought the Iran-Contra revelations had destroyed any chance of the President's getting renewed funding to resume the war.

Tom Loeffler was already a good friend, a fellow Texan, and I trusted his word implicitly. He suggested something entirely new and different: That as Speaker I join President Reagan in a bipartisan initiative for peace. We would jointly call on the Central American nations to negotiate settlements in Nicaragua and El Salvador based on a cease-fire, political amnesty for those who had been in revolt, and free elections to resolve the issues in dispute by popular will. In other words, ballots instead of bullets, with assurances of U.S. support.

That idea appealed strongly to me. After talking with the White House, Republican House leaders, and the bipartisan Senate leadership, I was encouraged. Some of my fellow Democrats were skeptical of the President's intentions, but most felt I should take the risk if there were a chance it could lead to peace. I talked also with Secretary of State George Shultz, who was instructed by President Reagan to work with me in the drafting of a joint statement.

Before formally agreeing, however, I wanted to test the waters in Central America. I had personal conversations with Presidents Duarte of El Salvador and Arias of Costa Rica. Both of them rejoiced at the prospect. They believed a united propeace front in Washington could lead to a series of negotiated settlements throughout Central America and end the bloodshed.

House Republican Leader Bob Michel and I asked Nicaraguan Ambassador Carlos Tunnermann to meet with us in the Capitol to probe the Nicaraguan Government's probable response to such an initiative as we had in mind. "What would it take," we asked, "for your country to get rid of Cuban and Russian military personnel, live in peace with your neighbors and restore the constitutional freedoms of your people that were suspended in the emergency law?"

Tunnermann answered that his government would be quite willing to do all of these things if we would simply "stop financing the invasion" of Nicaragua.

The President and I jointly issued the call for a regional cease-fire, and peace negotiations on August 5, just 2 days before the five Central American Presidents were to meet in conference in Esquipulas, Guatemala.

The result was better than I had dared hope. The Costa Rican Ambassador called me from the conference site to report the happy news that all five Presidents had entered a formal agreement embodying almost all the elements of the Wright-Reagan plan. The principal architect of the Esquipulas accord was President Oscar Arias of Costa Rica. For this work, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

At my invitation, Arias stopped off on his way through Washington in September and addressed the House. Meanwhile, the Nicaraguan Government appointed a peace commission, opened newspapers and radio stations that had been shut down, offered amnesty to those who had made war against the government, and invited them to participate in the political process including truly free elections, which ultimately would be held in 1990. The same amnesty procedure was going on under Duarte's direction in El Salvador. I was on cloud nine! From my point of view, everything was on track.

At about this point, I discovered that the White House was far from happy with the turn events had taken. While I fully expected our joint statement to stimulate the movement toward peace, President Reagan's advisors apparently anticipated refusal by the Nicaraguan Government to comply. Negative comments emanating from the White House gradually made it clear to me that highly placed people in the administration did not actually want a peacefully negotiated settlement in Nicaragua. They fully expected the talks to end in acrimony so they could use the "failure" of the attempted peace efforts as a justification for renewing the war.

This confronted me with a moral dilemma. At the urging of the administration, I had joined in the bipartisan call for peace. Overjoyed at the initial success of our efforts, I had met, at the White House's request, with leaders of the Contra directorate. Most of them, I saw, had faith in the peace effort. I also met with the Sandinista leaders whenever they came to my office. I was convinced that most Nicaraguans on both sides were eager for peace. But some bitterness lingered. Someone, aside from me, had to be a go-between, an honest broker who could bring the two sides together. Ideally, a Nicaraguan.

The only Nicaraguan fully trusted by both factions, I had learned from trips I'd taken to the region, was Catholic Cardinal Miguel Obando y Bravo. Responsible people in both camps agreed that he was the one to monitor the cease-fire and help arbitrate the differences. As Speaker and co-author of the call for peace, I met with the cardinal, whom I knew personally, at the papal nuncio's office in Washington, on November 13, 1987, and encouraged him to undertake that critical role. He agreed, and Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega, at my personal urging, agreed to give the cardinal a free hand.

The White House, bitterly resentful of my efforts in helping to keep the peace process on track, began attacking me angrily in the press. The President and Assistant Secretary of State Elliott Abrams considered my endeavors intrusive and presumptuous. Perhaps they were. But having committed myself in good faith to the effort to make peace, I was unwilling to be a party to its deliberate unraveling or allow that result if I could prevent it. Too many lives already had been lost. As a percentage of Central America's population, their war dead would equate to something like 5 million Americans—more than we have lost in all of our wars combined.

On two occasions—in December 1987 and February 1988—the President's forces tried to forsake the peace process altogether and revive the war by renewing military aid for the Contras. On both occasions, a majority in Congress voted down the request. At my personal urging, Congress did appropriate funds for humanitarian assistance—food, clothing, shelter and medical needs—for the Contra forces during the cease-fire.

As a consequence of my unwillingness to abandon the effort I had helped set in motion, I became a target for many personal attacks, both in the conservative press and from some of my Republican colleagues in Congress. It is ironic that, in bringing peace to Central America, I unconsciously drove a wedge between myself and the congressional minority, which ultimately inhibited my capacity to promote consensus on other issues.

In retrospect, I firmly believe I did the right thing. We ended the war and brought democracy to the region. One of the unavoidable challenges of the speakership is determining when the end result is worth risking one's

own popularity, perhaps even one's moral authority, with a segment of the membership. I do regret my inability to make peace between Democrats and Republicans over this issue. Perhaps a more cautious, more sensitive, more understanding person could have done that.

Shortly before the inauguration of the first President George Bush, the new President-elect and I had a long personal visit over lunch in my office—just the two of us. We explored the areas in which we could find agreement—including Central America and a balanced budget.

It was March 1989, with George Bush's blessing, that Secretary of State James Baker and I, along with others of both parties in the congressional leadership, issued a second statement which clearly disavowed the use of American-supported military force, and put all the influence of the United States behind the peace negotiation. This culminated in the free and fair election from which Violetta Chamorro emerged on February 25, 1990, as President of Nicaragua. In a broad sense, the fourth goal of my speakership was attained, but its attainment used up almost all that remained of my political capital.

What we did achieve is a result of the unstinting cooperation of many dedicated and cooperative Members. I am indebted to Minority Leader Bob Michel, as is the country, for his unstinting patriotism and his personal kindness. I could have done nothing as Speaker without the active advice and support of Tom Foley, Tony Coelho, David Bonior, and a host of others too numerous to name here.

Today, almost 14 years after retiring from Congress, I look back in amazement and look forward in hope, grateful to have been one of those few privileged to serve our country in this capacity, and hopeful that my colleagues and I may have contributed something worthwhile to the ongoing success of the dream that is America.

**Ms. HOOK.** Thank you very much Speaker Wright. And now we'll hear from David Bonior.

**Mr. BONIOR.** Good morning. How wonderful it is to be back with so many friends to share our experiences and to listen to those who were at the helm. Let me also express my thanks to the Congressional Research Service, the Carl Albert Research and Studies Center at Oklahoma University, and the McCormick Tribune Foundation for their commitment to the study of Congress and, in particular, the speakerships we recognize and we celebrate today.

In February 1999, I was accorded the honor of representing the House of Representatives at the funeral of King Hussein of Jordan and the U.S. delegation was led by President Clinton but it also included former Presidents Ford, Carter, and Bush. As we waited in a very ornate palace room for the funeral procession to begin, an aide entered the room and announced

for all to hear, “Mr. President it is time to proceed.” I could not help but notice at the words “Mr. President” that all four Presidents, as well as their staffs, moved forward. Despite the somber nature of our roles that day, I was moved by the historic moment of being with four Presidents—two Democrats, two Republicans. It was a remarkable feeling. It was an affirmation of our democracy and I feel that very same way today. It is such a privilege to participate in this conference.

With wisdom and enthusiasm, Speaker Wright has just shared with us his speakership. What I would like to do is comment upon his speakership first by offering some thoughts about Jim Wright the man. Second, I want to make some observations about the historic 100th Congress which he led so magnificently. Finally, I want to reflect upon the role he played as we have just heard in bringing about peace in Central America.

First, Jim Wright the man. Jim Wright has always had a commitment to ideas, often big ideas. And his ideas spring from a rigorous intellectual foundation. A serious thinker, a prolific writer, Jim Wright is a man of letters—a wordsmith, an author of many books and articles. He is a literary man. Jim Wright loves history and he understands well the prerogatives accorded the Congress under our Constitution. Like Senator Robert C. Byrd, Jim Wright appreciated our Founding Fathers’ fear of granting excessive power to the Executive. He was a steadfast champion of the institutional power assigned to the Congress. A serious student of Lyndon Johnson and Sam Rayburn, Jim Wright could also expound upon the ideas of Henry Clay to whom some scholars have favorably compared you.

Proverbs advise us that where there is no vision the people perish. Drawing from his broad historical perspective, Jim Wright had a vision and the ability and the will to pursue that vision. He rejected the notion that the President proposes and the Congress disposes. Rather, he believed as John Barry so very ably illustrated in his book *The Ambition and the Power* that Congress is a body which can initiate, a creative body which can lead.

The columnist Murray Kempton once observed about Walt Reuther that Walt Reuther is the only man I have ever met who could reminisce about the future. Well, I would likewise add Jim Wright. Jim Wright had an unusual wisdom about the connectivity of our past and present to our future, and he was famously determined and forceful in pursuing that future. A plaque in his Capitol office read, “Don’t tell me it can’t be done. Show me how it can.” He’s always been a doer. And to be a successful doer requires toughness. It requires daring qualities, which marked his tenure as Speaker.

Jim Wright was smart enough and tough enough and daring enough to take advantage of rule changes both in the Democratic Caucus and in the House of Representatives. You may recall that the newly elected Democratic Congress classes of 1974 and 1976 shifted powers away from committee chairs and put them on notice that the caucus would not tolerate separate

committee fiefdoms at the expense of the caucus or the House. The days of autocratic rule by the likes of Judge Howard Smith (D-VA), on the Rules Committee, were over. The stage was set for a Speaker to centralize power and to move a coordinated agenda forward. That reality, however, would await the election of Jim Wright as Speaker of the House in 1986. As the labor scholar Taylor Dark wrote, "Speaker Wright successfully concentrated power taking advantage of the previously unrealized potential of congressional reforms of the previous decade."

Together with his loyal and dedicated staff, Speaker Wright assembled a team which I was proud to be a part of, including Tom Foley, Tony Coelho, Danny Rostenkowski, Dick Gephardt and others. We initiated. It was the right time. The stars were aligned. President Reagan's Presidency had lost the momentum of its last 2 years. The Democrats had just regained the Senate and we had picked up seats in the House of Representatives. For 40 years Jim Wright had prepared for this opportunity. The previous 10 years were spent as a loyal majority leader to Speaker Tip O'Neill's team. Seneca once said, "Loyalty is the holiest good in the human heart." Leader Jim Wright had shown that loyalty to Tip O'Neill. Now, in turn, Tom Foley, Tony Coelho, and myself would demonstrate a similar loyalty to Speaker Wright as he inspired us with his passion and with his enthusiasm.

And so we turn to the 100th Congress. In Jim Wright we had a populist and an egalitarian as our Speaker. Seizing the moment, he crafted an agenda that resulted in one of the most productive Congresses in the history of the country. As the Speaker himself has recounted for us all, parts of the legislative machine were finely tuned so that when he started the engine in January 1987, our agenda would take off.

In preparation, Jim Wright gathered the committee chairs. He said he would be fair with them but that certain priority bills must be reported and reported on schedule. And, I'll tell you, I remember that meeting—the first one—with each chairperson taking the measure of their new leader knowing he was tough. There was no doubt about his expectations. Yes, these committee chairs would parent their legislation, but they would work with a progressive whip operation.

As a member of the Rules Committee appointed by Speaker Tip O'Neill, I knew where my responsibility to the caucus rested, in my appointment by the Speaker. Speaker Wright requested a meeting with each Democratic Rules Committee member, individually seeking their interest in serving another term and clearly conveying his expectations. This unprecedented process was another expression of Speaker Wright's determination to get off to a quick start.

Beside Speaker Wright, Tom Foley had the most experience in our leadership ascending from whip to majority leader. He was a generous source of counsel in helping us navigate the rules and the precedents and the sub-

stance and the politics. And, of course, Tony Coelho brought enormous talents to our whip operation, which met with stunning success especially in the early months. As effective as Speaker Wright was within the institution, he was equally impressive in rallying the support of the outside. You've got to have an inside and an outside.

A very close relationship existed between Jim Wright and the AFL-CIO, especially Lane Kirkland, its president; and Bob McLaughton, its chief lobbyist on the Hill. The AFL-CIO saw the 100th Congress as a moment of opportunity. Kirkland appointed McLaughton, an African-American, and Peggy Taylor as his assistants, adding much diversity to their operation. In addition, three important international unions during the eighties returned to the AFL-CIO: the UAW, the Mineworkers, and the Teamsters. A valuable symbiotic relationship developed. Our leadership would reinforce the concerns of labor and working people. The AFL-CIO would, in turn, support a broad array of issues. So there was born a process of effective cooperation between Capitol Hill and the "House of Labor" on 16th Street. Bob McLaughton was able to speak forcibly for a united labor movement and their growing army of lobbyists on the Hill. Indeed, his virtual authority to make a deal on the spot was crucial to our effectiveness in moving bills quickly and successfully.

So no one in our caucus would mistake our priorities, Speaker Wright, as he has just illustrated for us, reserved the first several House bill numbers for the clean water bill, the highway bill, and the omnibus trade bill. During the first 2 weeks, we passed the clean water bill and the highway bill by enough votes to overcome a Presidential veto. A few months later H.R. 3, the most significant trade bill since the thirties, passed by a vote of 290 to 137, again enough to override a veto. We inserted one of the most important labor provisions that the Congress would enact in the eighties—the plant closing and notification bill—into that trade bill, which Reagan vetoed in May 1988. We also reported out the plant and notification bill separate from the trade bill, and they both went to the President and became law. In 1981 the AFL-CIO's rate of success in the House of Representatives during the Reagan Presidency was 47 percent. Under Jim Wright, it went up to 92.8 percent in 1988.

In addition, the 100th Congress passed into law major bills to aid the homeless, the first important expansion of Medicare for catastrophic illnesses, and a welfare reform bill with progressive features to move people from welfare to work. Amazingly, the Congress also passed all 13 major appropriation bills and delivered them to the President for signing into law before the start of the new fiscal year.

There were sure to be some legislative disappointments for Speaker Wright. When the budget deficit exploded out of control, as he has just recounted for us, Speaker Wright early on in our caucus pushed hard for

tax fairness. But in his own words, he admitted, and I quote, "I spent a large piece of my political capital in the effort to make the tax burden fall more fairly only to discover that I had over-matched myself."

Well, many also thought that he had overmatched himself in challenging President Reagan in Central America, but his critics underestimated Jim Wright's passion for peace. He was not about to surrender his constitutional responsibilities. The right to declare war, as written in Article I of the Constitution, rested with the Congress. Henry Clay, who became Speaker in 1811, was the last Speaker to dominate foreign policy. Too many subsequent decades of congressional acquiescence had accompanied American foreign policy, none more devastating and misplaced than during the Indo-China war in the sixties and seventies.

A new crop of Vietnam generation legislators increased the congressional role in foreign affairs from enacting the War Powers Resolution to an aggressive human rights advocacy campaign. With the Contra war and the war in El Salvador ravaging Central America, claiming some 100,000 deaths, some of us were not going to tolerate it in silence or without a legislative fight. The previous legislative abdication had lasted 16 years and cost over 58,000 American lives and over 1 million Vietnamese lives.

Ronald Reagan gave more speeches on Nicaragua than on any other issue of his Presidency. During the eighties, we had 15 major debates on the House floor on this contentious issue, voting three times to cut off all military assistance to the Contras. Secretary of State Jim Baker accurately noted, and I quote, "The war in Central America was the Holy Grail for both the left and the right in the United States. It was the divisive foreign policy issue." Personally, I sometimes felt as if I spent more time in Managua and San Jose and San Salvador than in my own district.

The Reagan doctrine and the Monroe Doctrine were colliding with self-determination and with liberation theology. The mix was volatile and deadly and the region had spun out of control. Into this maelstrom stepped Jim Wright. Once again he was the right person at the right time. He spoke Spanish. He was a student of the region. He personally knew the leaders. Speaker Wright has told us how he proceeded—the meetings with Ambassador Tunnermann; the Wright-Reagan plan; the Esquipulas accord; our meeting with Cardinal Miguel Obando y Bravo; our continued fight to keep military aid from the Contras; our furious work to wind this all down while we had the momentum.

Before I close permit me to share one personal story that I'm sure Tom Loeffler will elaborate on. When Tom came to see the Speaker about a joint peace proposal, I was adamantly set against it. I did not trust the administration. I thought it was another setup that would fail and when it did the floodgates for more military aid would open up. I strenuously pressed my point of view in a very emotionally charged meeting. Finally, the Speaker

said to me, "People who are interested in peace do something about it." I paused. I thought. I reflected. I went along.

While I had lost faith in the administration, I had not lost faith in Speaker Wright. It became my job, along with Tom Foley and others, to sell the proposal to our caucus. You know, sometimes you just have to take a chance for peace. You do not make peace with your friends. You make peace with your enemies. This lesson I learned from Jim Wright. In a handwritten "thank you" to Jim Wright, Secretary Baker wrote, "But for you there would have been no bipartisan accord, without which there would have been no election."

President Oscar Arias of Costa Rica, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, which many believe should have been shared with Jim Wright, included in his "thank you" to Speaker Wright the following, and I quote, "Those {who advocated} peace will not forget you and thank you for your vision and your deep commitment to the highest ideals of justice, peace, and progress. The Esquipulas II process finally moved forward and is showing visible results for 28 million Central Americans." President Arias continued, "The Wright-Reagan plan, the bipartisan agreement between the Congress and the Executive, and finally the change in policy of the Bush Administration toward Central America are a testimony and confirmation that you were not mistaken. In truth, you did more for us in Central America than many of those who here call themselves standard-bearers of freedom. I feel that it has been a privilege to know you. Count me among your friends," concluded President Arias.

Wallace Stegner, one of our greatest American writers, wrote of friendship in his fine novel, *Crossing to Safety*. He said this about friendship. "Friendship is a relationship that has no formal shape. There are no rules or obligations or bonds as in marriage or families. It is held together by neither law, nor property, nor blood. There is no glue in it but mutual liking. It is therefore rare." Jim Wright is my dear friend. He has many friends in this room and around the country and around the world. He has done marvelous good deeds in his life. With a lust for life, he continues to live productively contributing to the public dialog, teaching at TCU, enjoying his many friends and family. John Barry captured my intense respect and admiration for Jim Wright's speakership with these words, "The ambition belongs to many men but none more than Jim Wright. He would use the 100th Congress of the United States, convened during the Bicentennial anniversary of the Constitution to earn his place in history. He would rise up and fill the sky with lightning bolts and he would become a target for them."

Mr. Speaker, it was a high honor to be part of your team. Bless you and Betty for your extraordinary service to our country.

**Ms. HOOK.** Thank you very much, Mr. Bonior. And now we'll hear from Tom Loeffler.

**Mr. LOEFFLER.** Thank you, Janet. It is an honor for me to be included amongst this distinguished group, and to be able to share my observations concerning an individual I admire and respect, Speaker Jim Wright. I'm delighted to appear with David Bonior. In one of the highlights of Jim's career, David's career, and my post-House career, we were able to work together to bring about something that was extraordinary given the political climate of the time. In a moment, I will go into more detail on the remarkable achievement, which would never have been possible without the leadership of Speaker Wright.

As a Texan fresh out of law school and new to Washington, D.C., I had the great opportunity to grow up under the tutelage of Senator John Tower. I also had the privilege of working in the Ford White House, where I met many of my senior congressional colleagues before I actually served alongside them in the Congress. I can recall a moment in December 1976 after the election of Jimmy Carter when the newly elected Members were convening to organize the new Congress for 1977–1978. The tickertape in the East Wing of the White House was just going nuts. I walked over to it, and I looked, and it says: "Jim Wright wins by one vote" the majority leader position in the House of Representatives. Little did I know that 2 years later I would be his colleague.

Before I speak of Jim Wright in a global way, I wish to share with you the perception of those of us who served with him in the Texas delegation. Whether we were Democrats or Republicans, we knew that Speaker Wright had an incredibly tight rope to walk. Politically, he did this in a very adroit fashion because Texas politics were changing. In 1971, when I was beginning my work with Senator Tower, Texas was evolving into a two-party State.

It is important to understand that as Jim grew in leadership within this body, his advocacy for issues didn't necessarily jive with the evolving Texas political landscape. Through his astute political skills, Jim was able to continue to grow in leadership within his party, ultimately rising to the pinnacle of Speaker, while still having the absolute stout support of all Texans. He did all this in spite of the changing party dynamic back home. And remember in Texas, as we were reflecting upon the O'Neill speakership, Texans liked to poke fun at Tip. But that never transferred to Jim. Even before he was part of the official leadership on the Democratic side, he was a capable leader in the Texas delegation. Jim was always there to help on every issue that was a Texas issue, whether it was in a Democratic congressional district or a Republican congressional district. There was a bond among those of us in the Texas delegation where we always knew that when

there was a day of reckoning and we needed help for Texans, Jim Wright would be right by our side.

Jim Wright's word is his bond. He is one of the fairest people that I have ever worked with. He is also one of the most articulate Members that this Congress has ever had or will ever have in its body. Mr. Speaker, I will never forget the time at a Texas State Society luncheon when you and Senator Tower were speaking together, and, all of a sudden, Tower became quiet. Never one to yield the floor, unless of course he was good and ready, I asked the Senator why he had stopped talking. He answered very strictly, "Because I didn't want to take Jim Wright on. I knew I'd lose."

The final comments that I have concern the formulation of the Wright-Reagan plan. I had left Congress to return to my home State and run for statewide office, as David Bonior recently did in Michigan. After my failed run for Governor, I had a call from Howard Baker asking me, on behalf of the President, if I would return to the White House to work with my many friends in Congress to bring about a unique and unbelievable occurrence. It was President Reagan's hope that the Congress and the White House would speak with one voice on American foreign policy as it related to Central America. In my lifetime I could not remember when that had been the case.

After I arrived at the White House, my first call was to Jim Wright. I went to his leadership office and we sat down and began a frank discussion. As we concluded, the only thing that we could give to each other was the understanding that we would be honest with one another, we would tell each other the truth, and if we could move it forward on behalf of the President and the speakership, we would. And, if we couldn't, we would shake hands and go about our business knowing that we had done our very best.

Before returning to the White House, I stopped in to see Minority Leader Bob Michel and reported that in our meeting the Speaker indicated an extremely high interest in moving this forward. As one could have expected, after our initial meeting a lot of things happened that nearly derailed the process. I remember when David Bonior and Majority Leader Foley and I were alone after one of Speaker Wright's meetings—Trent Lott and Bob Michel had gone off, and Tony Coehlo and Jim had gone off—and the two of them looked at me and said, "Do you know what you're doing to the Speaker? You're absolutely setting him up." All I could say was, "I hope not." They, obviously being very honorable and very close friends with respect for me and knowing what a failed outcome could mean, said, "We pray you're not."

During the course of this 10-day period, something rare and significant occurred. Speaker Wright and Senate Majority Leader Bob Byrd convened a meeting in H127. The room was full, 25 to 30 Members of Congress on

both sides of the aisle, along with Secretary of State George Schultz and Colin Powell, Deputy National Security Advisor to the President. Here the initial parts of what was being discussed between the congressional leadership and the administration were laid out for those who would be critical in seeing the legislation through. This group consisted of such people as Congressman David Obey and Senator Jesse Helms, and everyone in between. That meeting—and all of our meetings for 10 days—never became public knowledge. If they had gone public, I do not believe that the Wright-Reagan plan would have reached fruition.

The night before the Speaker and the bipartisan congressional delegation from the House and the Senate arrived at the White House for the final stamp of approval on the Wright-Reagan plan, Jim Wright called and said, “You know, Tom, we’ve had a great run together. You know the President and I are not the closest of friends. I would really like to do something that would be meaningful to the President because I know this is an unbelievable moment, and I know that he has shot straight with me, been honest and fair, and this is going to be a big day. What would you suggest?” After some thought, the commonality of their western influence struck me, so I said, “Jim, why don’t you wear your black ostrich boots?”

Well, the morning that everyone was arriving at the White House, we had a few little glitches that we had to iron out, and I was never able to get to the President and give him the heads up on Jim’s wearing of cowboy boots as a friendly gesture. So, everyone went in, and I was the last one into the Oval Office. The President was sitting with Jim at his side, and I’ll be darned if President Reagan didn’t turn to the Speaker to say, “Jim, I sure like those boots.” And I thought at that moment: “We’ve made it!”

Jim is a rare breed in our business. A most distinguished gentleman, master politician and negotiator, loyal and honest as the day is long. Mr. Speaker, I’m delighted we’ve had a chance to play a role together. And I’m honored to stand here today once again by your side. Thank you.

**Ms. HOOK.** Thanks very much Mr. Loeffler and Mr. Bonior, and I’m sure many of you would like to ask questions of the Speaker. We’re running a little late though, but I’m sure Speaker Wright will be around and maybe you can approach him and talk to him informally. I’d just like to close by thanking Speaker Wright for traveling here to join us today and thanks to the Congressional Research Service for making this whole panel possible.

I want to close by recalling a line that I remember. I don’t know what the context was when Mr. Wright said this but it stuck in my mind while I was covering him and it has stuck in my mind for many years. I think it’s something that summarizes Jim Wright’s ambitious approach to the

speakership. He once said, “We make a greater mistake when we think too small than when we think too big.” Thank you all very much.